

## STERILE PROCESSING PROCEDURE STERILIZATION

**Procedure SP3-3:** Operation of steam sterilizers in sterile processing



**Policy Number Superseded:**

**Effective Date:**  
December 2025

**Responsibility:** Operations Manager,  
Sterile Processing

**Initial Effective Date:**  
2006

**Purpose of Procedure:** To provide an effective sterilization method for surgical instruments able to withstand high temperatures.

### **Procedure:**

Whenever possible, steam sterilization will be used to sterilize surgical instrumentation.

(A) Load set up.

- (1) Inspect packaging to ensure that peel pouches are correctly sealed, wrapped instruments are properly wrapped, and containerized instruments are properly packaged.
- (2) Make sure that all items to be sterilized are placed on the sterilizer cart with a gap between them wide enough to slide your hand in between the trays.
- (3) Largest, heaviest trays will be loaded on the bottom back first.
- (4) All solid pans will be on the bottom rack.
- (5) Place a BI challenge pack next to the chemical integrator challenge pack.
- (6) Place a sterilizer load sticker on all items to be sterilized. The sterilizer load sticker contains the following data: **(Julian Date, Sterilizer #, Load #, Calendar Date)**.

(B) Recording in SPM

- (1) In SPM, click "Sterilizer Loads".
- (2) Choose the sterilizer you intend to use.
- (3) Click "Start New Load".
- (4) Choose the cycle.
- (5) Click "Load Contents" and scan all items to be sterilized.
- (6) Click "Tests".
- (7) Choose BI and enter the lot number of the BI.
- (8) Choose "Integrator".
- (9) If a drain check is required (3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the day), click "Additional Test" then click "Drain Check".
- (10) *Make sure you actually check the drain.*
- (11) Print the load contents report and place a load sticker in the top center of the page.
- (12) Click "Finish and Mark Cycle as Started."

(C) Running the load.

- (1) Verify that items on sterilizer cart match exactly what is listed on the contents sheet. Correct any errors.
- (2) Load sterilizer cart into sterilizer using caution as sterilizer is hot then close the door.
- (3) Choose the cycle and press start.
- (4) *Make sure your chosen machine cycle matches the cycle chosen in SPM.*
- (5)** Sterilizer tape will print at beginning of load.
- (6) *Place a load sticker at the top of the sterilizer tape. Initial the top of tape.*
- (7) Attach Contents Sheet to sterilizer cart handle.

(D) Completion of load.

When load is complete:

- (1) Unlock door and allow residual steam to vent, approximately 10 seconds.
- (2) While steam is venting, verify that sterilization parameters were met:
  - (a) Read "Sterilize Time". Write the time on tape next to printed time. **If the time is below the cycle time requirements, the entire load is to be rewrapped and resterilized.**

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- (b) Read “ Temp Min”. Write the temp on the tape next to the printed temp. **If the minimum temp is below the cycle temp requirements, the entire load is to be rewrapped and resterilized.**
  - (3) If all parameters have been met, initial the bottom of tape. This indicates your acknowledgement and approval that the cycle has passed all parameters.
- (E) Opening the sterilizer door.
  - (1) Open door and remove biological and chemical test packs. **(E VERY CAREFUL.** Process both according to procedure.
  - (2) Remove load and verify tape color changes on packages.
  - (3) When the load is cool to the touch, verify that there are no wet packages. If there are, alert a surgical tech and inspect all packages that were in that load. All wet packages must be torn down, rewrapped and re-sterilized.
  - (4) After testing the temperature of one pack per level, and it is at or below 75°F, the load may now be transferred to the instrument delivery cart.

Approved by:  
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Operations Supervisor, Sterile Processing

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